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FREEDOM OF TEACHING IN SCIENCE

June 14, 1922

The Moderator
Conference of Northern Baptist Churches
Indianapolis, Indiana

Dear Sir:

As President of the American Association of University Professors, I desire to call attention to the peril confronting our higher institutions of learning at the present time because of the "Fundamentalist" or "anti-evolution" movement which has appeared in two state legislatures and in the constituencies of several colleges controlled by or affiliated with the religious denominations.

Letters from presidents and professors indicate widespread anxiety lest the cause of higher education suffer serious injury through attempts at coercive measures, interfering with the professor's duty to teach the truth of his subject as determined by the body of past and present laborers in his own field and as confirmed by his own conscientious studies and researches. The chief injury is not merely to the professor who loses his position or to the particular institution that sacrifices a permanent aim to a passing fear. It is in the degradation of the office of teachers; in the establishment of distrust and suspicion in the public mind towards all colleges and universities; and in the immediate loss to both church and state of strong forces for good through the slackening of devotion and enthusiasm, and the encouragement of casuistry, subtlety, and insincerity among those who are called to teach with an eye single to truth.

The colleges controlled by or affiliated with religious bodies are public institutions in the sense that they solicit and receive students on terms common to all good colleges. They impose on applicants no political or religious tests. They forewarn the public of no doctrine in history, economics, literature, and the sciences, that is essentially at variance with the body of free and accepted teaching in those departments of learning throughout the country. Their professors coöperate in the work of all of the learned societies, and are

bound by the code of honor in scientific research and by the obligation of scrupulous honesty of statement in teaching. Any invasion of this high obligation is an attack on manhood in teaching and destructive to real education.

Any college or university, whatever its foundation, that openly or secretly imposes unusual restrictions upon the dissemination of verified knowledge in any subject that it professes to teach at all, or that discourages free discussion and the research for the truth among its professors and students will find itself shunned by professors who are competent and by students who are serious. It will lose the best of its own rightful constituency and will cease to fulfill its high ministry. The same results, disastrous to true education, will follow whether the restrictions are adopted voluntarily by the college itself, or are forced upon its administrative officers by the state legislature, an ecclesiastical body, or by powerful influence operating through trustees. The question of legality, and of good motive, is also irrelevant so far as moral and educational results are concerned.

The five thousand members of the American Association of University Professors in active service in some two hundred colleges and universities of the United States are of one mind on the fundamental necessity of preserving the integrity of the teaching profession. They realize that their work is a sacred trust that can be fulfilled only in freedom of conscience, loyalty to the truth, and a profound sense of duty and of personal responsibility. They claim the support of all good Americans whatever their creed in resisting measures that will prove ruinous to our institutions of higher learning.

Yours respectfully
J. V. DENNEY, *President*.